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ABSTRACT

Research concerning teacher readership characteristics--the quality, quantity, and variety of leisure and professional reading--indicates that teachers' reading attitudes and interests reflect a disinterest in social issues as well as in professional literature. As far as book reading is concerned, research has revealed that on the average teachers do read more than the public. However, factors detrimental to teacher readership exist, including the teacher's job, the grading of student papers, housework, television viewing for relaxation, and children. Furthermore, there is evidence that some teachers do have reading difficulties. Thus, readership research involves the major implication that more stringent screening procedures are necessary in admitting students to teacher training, an issue that the total university should face in assessing its academic influence during a student's formative training years. (An annotated bibliography is included.) (JM)

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"A Critical Review of the Teacher Readership Characteristics Research and the Implications for Performance Based Teaching."

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Introduction

Teacher readership characteristics may be defined as the quantity, quality, and variety of reading that teachers engage in for leisure and professional purposes, Bradley (1966), Roeder (1968), and Duffey (1966,1973).

Pansophia Revisited

It is sheer irony that the basic problem of this review of teacher readership characteristics is inherent in John Amos Comenius' "...grandiose scheme for the correlation and advancement of science...Pansophia (or)... universal wisdom," as recorded by Eby and Arrowood (1937). The historians also note that, "The curriculum proposed by Comenius is all-comprehensive or encyclopedic in scope." The preceding quotations serve as a model of what researchers, critics, and reviewers expect of teachers, even though Eby and Arrowood (1937,p. 271) noted that "In the 20th century, nobody in his right senses would hazard such a suggestion, and even three hundred years ago it was a palpable exaggeration." In the 1930's Eby and Arrowood did not have access to the writings of Toffler's (1970) Future Shock, Miller's (1964) "The Information Explosion: Implications for Teaching," and Spache's (1968) "Material Explosion" to observe the futility of attaining the good Bishop Comenius's impossible dream. A review of the readership literature has left the writer with the impression that the enormous readership expectation of teachers by critics are for the most part an impossible dream.

The Qualitative Aspects of Pansophia

Weintraub (1967) noted Waple's (1933) observation that the reading attitudes and interests of teachers are lacking in seriousness and reflect an

inadequacy to an awareness of social issues if teachers are to serve as models for pupils. This observation is repeatedly stressed in surveys of readership critiques by Odland and Ilstrup (1963), Balow (1961), Weaver (1969), Duffey (1967), and Roeder (1972). With regard to Duffey's findings, N.H., an ERIC reviewer, (ED037327), summed up Duffey's survey of 213 teachers in the following words: "The author believed that the results showed that the teachers revealed a shocking disregard for one of their highest professional obligations - to be widely read."

Weaver (1969) administered the Time Current Events Test 1968 and found that many scored low. The high scoring group read more news magazines, whereas the lower scoring group read fewer news sources. On the one hand, the variety of news that the teachers read was considered inadequate to understand the great issues of our time. On the other hand, elementary teachers were also taken to task by Weaver and Duffey because they did not read the sports pages which were considered important for teachers if they were to be conversant with the interests of boys. A further comment of the general trends in this review is exemplified by Duffey's (1973) findings that precipitated the following statement: "Dramatic losses in readership occurred in the national and the state education association journals' between 1966 and 1972! One wonders, is it possible that teachers are not interested in national issues?"

In 1967 the most widely read magazine in Duffey's survey was the NEA Journal. It slipped to third place position by 1972. Other significant shifts in teacher interest took place. The Instructor and the Grade Teacher moved up to the one and two positions. The Reading Teacher moved up two notches from eighth to sixth. The distinguished Elementary School Journal was eliminated

from the University of Maryland rankings by 1972. Duffey's survey trends show an increased interest in functional, practical professional reading, and a decline in the critical reading of social issues. More surveys like Duffey's replication of his 1967 survey are needed to reveal trends in teacher readership interests.

Books Read

Traditionally book reading by teachers was an important means of maintaining awareness of issues and expanding their endless quest toward Comenius's ideal of Pansophia, or universal widsom. Duffey (1966) found that his sample of elementary school teachers reported and listed an average of 3.17 books in 1966, and in 1972 another teacher sample listed 3.2 books read during the preceding year. Duffey emphasized that the books read were underestimated due to the fact that teachers probably had difficulty remembering titles. A cheerful note in Duffey's findings is that the number of teachers who had not reported reading a book in 1966 was 14.5 per cent and in 1972 the previous per cent declined to 10.9 per cent. Could it be that the University of Maryland subjects showed improvement because Duffey and Weaver have exercised leadership in this field?

Roeder (1968) reported that his New York random sample of teachers read 8.5 books in comparison to a similar socio-economic status group of females who read 8 books in a year. Bradley's (1966) Jefferson County (Golden Triangle) Texas sample of teachers read 5.5 books for six months. Hawkins (1967) reported that his sample of teachers read 4 leisure books and 4 professional books in a three month period. It appears that on the average teachers read about 10-12 books per year.

One inescapable observation is that teachers are reading more than the

public at large as indicated by the following: Roos (1955) and Bradley (1966) stated that 75 per cent of the public does not even read one book a year, and one per cent of the population reads about 5 books a year; however, according to Duffey (1967, 1973) only 10-15 per cent of the teachers do not read one book per year. These statements and observations temper the negative images ascribed to teachers as readers by Roeder (1968) and others. Bradley's review (1966) noted surveys that revealed negative book readership images for businessmen and labor leaders.

In so far as book reading is concerned, the readership research indicates that teachers do read and read more than the public on the average. A small 10-15 per cent of the teachers do not read books at all.

Another observation that characterizes the teacher leisure readership investigations is that the investigators ignore the required professional reading preparation teachers engage in for classroom teaching purposes. Therefore, it would be interesting to know whether the combined leisure reading and the required professional reading that teachers must engage in for instructional purposes exceeds even more the total reading of the public. Perhaps a forthcoming report by the Educational Testing Service (1972) will compare teacher readership characteristics with the public at large and other professional occupations.

Factors Detrimental to Teacher Readership

Bradley (1966, p. 85) asked 214 teachers to list the factors that were most detrimental to their leisure reading. An abridged table, from Bradley's dissertation, Factors Detrimental to Reading, show the first five factors by rank and the percentage of teachers who identified the factor:

FACTORS DETRIMENTAL TO READING

Detrimental Factors	%	Rank
Job	61	1
Grading of Student Papers	49	2
Housework	40	3
Watch Television Instead	29	4
Children	24	5

For the most part, Bradley's data confirms Brickman's (1957) view of obstacles that impede professional reading. Brickman also stressed the vigorous energy demands of teaching and administration in that teachers needed leisure to recuperate from their intense professional involvement, perhaps this accounts for T. V. viewing. In a critical vein, Brickman entertains the thought that some of the teachers are lazy and really are not committed to maintaining professional advancement. On the other hand, Brickman also noted that professional education literature is written in such an unpopular style that educators are frightened at the thought of reading them. The latter impression is shared by Garverick (1967, p. 192) who noted that "...few psychological articles in psychological journals are written for teachers' use" and, as such, much professional literature discourages reading by teachers. Stewig's (1973) criticism of professional reading methods textbooks comes a little closer to home. He noted that of the 5 leading reading methods books that are used to train thousands of teachers, the texts devoted "...an absymal 0%... to an anemic 5.35% (or) ...an average of 1.84% of the text total pages ...to enjoyment, appreciation, pleasure, or interest." Stewig concluded: "unless a future teacher is already hooked on books, the reading methods text studies may do little or nothing to encourage the production of reading addicts." The preceding thought

calls attention to Roeder's (1968, 1971) findings that put the blame squarely on the teacher in some of the following statements from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education newsletter, MAST, (1971): "Roeder thinks he found out what few teachers would admit outright: a lot of them do not read much and do not like to read." In conclusion, Roeder said "Perhaps many teachers do not like to read, ...because they do not read well themselves." More recently, Mueller (1973) tended to agree with Roeder. The preceding provocative thought suggests the question: Do teachers have reading difficulties? Interestingly, readership investigations have not directed attention to the above question. Research has shown that it is difficult to have adult subjects admit that they have reading difficulties as McDonald (1961) and the ETS surveys (1972) revealed. Consequently, we cannot know for certain just how large a relationship there is between teacher readership and reading ability. What about Roeder's question? Is there evidence that teachers and preservice teachers have reading difficulties? The following section touches on the question that has been raised.

Reading Related Difficulties of Teachers

Actually, Simpson (1942) came close to the demonstration of a relationship between reading ability and the reading of professional materials. He administered the Iowa Silent Reading Tests (ISRT) to teachers, administrators, and 12th grade high school students. Results on the ISRT indicated that 26 per cent of the high school students had higher median scores than the faculty on word meaning and 50 per cent of the students had higher median scores on comprehension than the faculty! Simpson also revealed evidence that of 746 faculty members, 14 per cent did not read a professional article in the month preceding the survey. Unfortunately, Simpson's reading achievement scores and readership

survey data were not derived from the same faculty and therefore the relationship between teacher reading ability and teacher readership could not be determined. Ilika and Sullivan's investigation of collateral reading flexibility among teacher trainees in methods of reading courses and found that only 3 students out of 25 students attained statistically significant correlations between rate of reading and the reading difficulty of ten professional articles about reading. Astonishingly student negative correlation ratios occurred 10 times out of 25 and this can be interpreted to mean that many students read difficult articles rapidly and easy articles slowly! Geeslin and York (1970-71) reported: "Findings indicate minimum functional literacy skills among some teachers assigned to inservice training, and evidence that some participants in teacher trainer institutes function at levels barely literate. These findings indicate the necessity for more strict evaluation of persons completing preservice training, applying for teacher certification, applying for continuing contracts, and serving in the classroom." Similarly, Cline (1969, p. 680) concluded: "Since all acquired evidence indicates that verbal skills and reading ability are important for college success now and for later teacher performance and success, it seems plausible to use a reading test, such as the Nelson Denny, as a means of evaluating student applicants into into teacher education programs." Cline's recommendations are in accord with observations by Diedrich (1973) and findings by Levin (1970).

Dahlke (1972) found the mean vocabulary and comprehension scores of teachers on the Diagnostic Reading Survey Test to be sufficiently low to recommend individualized advanced reading improvement courses, and Marksheffel (1966) found similar results. With regard to prerequisite reading skills, Ilika (1970)

reported the California Phonics Survey (CPS) scores of preservice teachers, undergraduate speech majors, and graduate students who were teachers. Speech majors attained statistically significant mean differences over the preservice teachers. At least ten per cent of the teacher education students had severe phonics disability according to the CPS test manual. In a subsequent report, Ilika and Stenning (1973) reported results that revealed that the 10 per cent of the preservice teachers who scored low on the CPS improved their status from "severe phonics disability" to "mild phonics disability" via intensive tape audio phonics activity workbooks. Whereas, a control group did not improve. Miller (1958) reported that students in his reading methods courses improved their pre-test reading rates by 98 per cent as a result of the methods course activities.

Apparently, Roeder's notion that there are teachers who do not read well themselves has validity on the basis of the evidence just mentioned. It is gratifying to note that there are multipurpose reading methods courses that demonstrate that reading professors can practice what they preach! But is this enough?

Implications for Performance Based Teacher Education (PBTE)

A major implication of readership research is that reading professors should start practicing what they preach in the area of content reading as Roeder (1971) intimated and as Bowen (1973) has found in one of the largest PBTE programs.

We need to identify reasonable competencies that are correlates of professional performance for inclusion in PBTE programs. PBTE rationale emphasizes entry behavior and exit behavior attainment and intervening learning activities. We have much experience in college reading programs that serve as prototypes for

PBTE. What needs to be done is to transpose our art into the framework of teacher education for the development of those teachers who have not mastered reading competencies essential for teaching.

The issue of teacher interests about current problems is greater than what can be shaped into reading modules or courses. It reverts to something more basic in the admittance of students to teaching and as such it calls for more stringent screening procedures to teacher training. The total university must face this issue collectively as a product of the academic influence during the formative years of the teacher preparation.

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